



Hot Fudge Sundae



👁 55 ✓ 26 ★ 8

Chapter 1 by Fanwizard

"Hazel?" Mom's lips are pursed, which is never a good sign.

"Yeah?" I set my empty cereal bowl on the coffee table.

"Your father and I need to talk to you."

Clues that it's really serious.

1. Mom's lips are pursed.
2. She doesn't scold me for putting my empty dishes on the table.
3. She says 'your father' instead of 'Dad'.
4. I don't even get a chance to brush my teeth or hair/change clothes.

Mom and Dad sit on the couch beside each other, but with several inches of space between them. Not a good sign.

"Hazel, you're here because of a decision your mother and I made," Dad said slowly.

See? There the adults go again, saying 'your mother' this and 'your father' that. It's enough to make a person mad!

"There's no other way to say it," Mom continued. "We're getting a divorce."

That last word just stunned me. It was so shocking it was almost funny. But now my throat felt tight with a lump I couldn't swallow.

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"W-what?" my voice comes out hoarse and raspy.

"Your mother and I are serious," Dad says. "There's no right forward answer."

"But this is temporary, right? I knew the answer before I even asked the question."

"Mellin' honey, this is going to be permanent," Mom says is gently, but the blow is fatal.

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"Hazel, no matter what happens with your mother and I, we'll always be a family and love you forever." Dad's basically become one of those books called *Things To Tell Your Child When You Are Giving A Divorce*. (I bet you that book is still at the bookstore clearance section.)

"I'm going to Juliet's," I said flatly.

"Hazel, we can talk about this," Dad's voice has an edge to it.

"Peter," Mom's voice is gentle but firm. "Let her have some room."

"It's your fault that you didn't start telling her earlier," Dad muttered.

"Like what?" Mom sounded angry now. "Just because I'm the mother, I have to suddenly force her to accept this and the move?"

I froze. "What move?"

Dad started muttering under his breath. Mom cleared her throat. "Hazel, your father's going to be moving out - by himself - to England. You and I will be moving closer to your aunt Meixiang, for the time being."

My heart suddenly felt like it had stopped beating. Aunt Meixiang lived in an entirely different state!

"I'm going to Juliet's," I repeated to myself, fleeing from the room.

"Hazel Lila Song-" Dad began but was shortly cut off by Mom.

"Give her time to think," Mom said softly.

I grabbed my bike from the garage and pedal so hard it's almost enough to drown my thoughts. But it's not. I barely make it to Juliet's doorstep without going insane from the screaming thoughts.

Juliet opens the door, looking me up and down. "You do realize that you're still wearing your pajamas so either the crisis is really urgent or you forgot to change the morning."

And there's my daily inspirational Juliet Evans speech.

"It's the urgent crisis," I confirm. "You're not busy, are you?"

I was going to redo my bedroom, but the posters can wait," Juliet stepped into her house. "Meet you at the garage."

The door closed.

Once we were far past Juliet's street, I suddenly was aware the fact that Juliet was still wearing her pajamas.

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"Hey Juliet?"

"Uh-huh?"

"You're still wearing your pajamas!"

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Juliet shrugged. "We can be pajama sisters."

"Where are we going?"

Juliet smiled at me. "The one and only Brewhouse Coffee Shop."

Though Juliet and I never drank coffee, the Brewhouse Coffee Shop served the best lemonade, pies, cakes, homemade ice cream, hot chocolate, pancakes, and of course, hot fudge sundaes.

Erin, the owner knew us personally from our frequent visits.

We ordered one large hot fudge sundae and took two spoons. At her insistence, Juliet paid. It was an unspoken rule that the person without the urgent crisis paid.

While waiting for our order, I told Juliet everything, beginning to when I placed my empty cereal bowl on the table to leaving the house.

The conversation ended briefly when Juliet picked up the order and we dug in. Normally wearing pajamas while eating hot fudge sundaes right after breakfast with Juliet sitting across from me would have lifted my spirits. But today was not normal.

"So your parents are separating and you're moving one state away."

See, Juliet is great at summarizing.

"When are you moving?"

"I think after the school year ends."

Juliet paused. "'You're off to great places. Today is your day. Your mountain is waiting, so get on your way.'"

I blinked. "You're not freaking out or saying goodbye?"

"Puh-leeze," Juliet rolled her eyes. "Don't you think I'd come up with a plan? Besides, 'never say goodbye because saying goodbye means going away and going away means forgetting.'"

"So what's your plan?"

"Ask my mom to drive me to your house, spend birthdays, winter break, spring break, and summers with you. 'Distance does not matter in true friendship.'"

Is there any doubt why she's my best friend?

Out of nowhere, Juliet squished me into a hug.

"'Good friends are hard to find, harder to leave, and impossible to forget,'" I mumble.

"Shut up" Juliet said playfully. "'How lucky am I to have something that makes saying goodbye

so hard

How lucky indeed

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Chapter Story Evaluator

"I think that's the last of it," I drop the masking tape and lean back against the wall. My feet are sore.

I had finished packing all my belongings into four boxes with Juliet's help. Dad was packing his belongings, ready to be shipped to England. And Mom was working in the office, tying loose ends, especially the divorce papers and selling the house.

"Hey, you missed something," Juliet bent down, picked up a strip of paper, suddenly falling silent. "What?"

She hands it over to me and I fall silent too.

It's the faux date that Juliet had set up, when her crush, Alex, knew she liked him, but liked someone else, Phoebe. She had decided I needed a man in my life, knew I liked Andrew, and set us up on a faux date.

We went to the movies, Chick-Fil-A, and to a photo booth, where we had taken pictures, making silly faces. I remember laughing so hard at something that Andrew said that I nearly choked, and then Andrew started laughing. It had been a wonderful first date, especially since it was laid back and casual.

There was only one serious picture on the strip. One where Andrew had kissed my cheek.

I was thirteen when the picture was taken, last year in the spring. A year and a half had passed between the time when the picture was taken. A lot had changed. Andrew had shot up eight inches and I had grown four inches. He had gotten contacts, his hair a little messier and longer than it was when the picture was taken.

Yet I still remembered the shock yet utter bliss when Andrew had just leaned over and kissed my cheek. It hadn't even lasted for five seconds, but it was all I needed.

"Andrew," Juliet said softly. "What's going to happen with him?"

"What?"

Juliet turned to face me, her eyes worried and a bit sympathetic. "You're moving to another state, and Andrew never got around to say this, but he always liked you. From the minute he saw you in second grade. He accidentally told me when I was planning out the date, but made me swear that I would never tell you until the moment was right. I almost forgot about it, until I saw the picture."

"Alex?" The word sounded hollow in my mouth.

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Chapter 4 by Vintage Girl

"You could call him right now."

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"And say what? *Hey, Andrew, I just found out you liked me. But hey, the joke's on you, because I'm moving to another state. Andrew, it looks like you'll have to find another girl to crush on.*"

Juliet elbowed me. "Right before he met you, Andrew had a crush on Sophia."

Sophia was the nicest, sweetest, prettiest, and most perfect girl in our grade. She was the person who was so sickly sweet that you wanted to hate but couldn't help but like.

Sophia was also boy crazy and had a crush on Andrew since forever. Unfortunately, her feelings for him were unrequited.

"Hey, if you don't call him, I'll call him. You should at least tell him, not just leave him in the dust. He really cared about you. Whenever you had a class with him, he just stared at you. If you weren't there, he seemed to droop."

"Juliet, Andrew is a human being. Not some plant that didn't get watered for a few days."

"This will sound cheesy," Juliet warned, "but I think Andrew looked forward to school because he would see you."

"Hazel, sweetheart! Andrew's at the door!" Mom called.

Juliet and I shared a look. It was now or never.

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